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NOTES

CORRECTION TO CRESCENT LAKE ITEMS. Mark J. Heisinger's name was misspelled in the Crescent Lake items in the December issue -- *NBR* 53, pages 53 and 80 (twice), and Kevin J. Brennan was misspelled the first time mentioned on page 72.

HERON ROOKERY. When South Sioux City pilot Gene Martin flew over an area of mature cottonwoods along the Missouri River, near Homer, Neb.,

on 15 June 1985 he spotted about 30 heron nests in the tree tops. This was near the Thurston Co. line. The following morning Art Huser, of Sioux City, Iowa, and I located the rookery from the ground, and confirmed them to be nests of Great Blue Herons. No other species of herons were seen. In contrast to their conspicuity from the air, the nests were very difficult to locate and view from the ground, due to the intervening dense understory and canopy. A more accurate count of the nests or juveniles could not be made, but by late June several young were seen to have reached adult size.

--- *Bill Huser, 319 W. 17th St., South Sioux City, Neb. 68775*

YORK COUNTY: We have lots of water in our basins again now (5 August 1985) and lots of waterfowl showing up. I've never seen so many Great Blue Herons around here before. We counted 25 of them and one Great Egret in our basin today at one time. I'm sure there were a lot more still out of sight in the tall grass. Norris Alfred and I have been out birding a few times

lately and we have seen the Mississippi Kites almost every time.

--- Lee Morris, Rt. 1, Box 14, Benedict, Neb. 68316

NO BEARING ON OUR BEAN GOOSE. On 18 November 1985 a strange goose was seen by a number of people at Squaw Creek NWR, Mo. On 21 November a goose, apparently the same goose, was seen again, and on 29 November a goose, apparently the same goose, was picked up, suffering from lead poisoning. It was identified as a western European race of the Bean Goose (*A. f. fabilis*). The specimen was sent to the University of Missouri. Some who saw the specimen or a couple of color pictures of it provided by Berlin Heck, manager of the Refuge, felt it was an aberrant form of a White-fronted Goose. Either way, there is no apparent connection with the Bean Goose seen at DeSoto NWR in early 1985 (*NBR* 53:3), since it was an Eastern Siberian type.

WATERFOWL CONCENTRATION. From about 9 November 1985 until at

least the 19th there were about 10,000 Snow Geese in this area, mostly on Rogert's lake. Local people say that this has not occurred since the 1950's. There were some Canadas in with them. A week later thousands of Mallards arrived, but since Rogert's lake was full of the geese they were staying on a lake across the road, to the east. There were some Ruddies and Canvasbacks in with them. Both the ducks and the geese are feeding on fields where the corn has been harvested.

--- *Marjorie Graf, 509 Washington St., Waterloo, Neb. 68069*

MINDEN NOTES. I found a Dickcissel nest with 3 young on 30 June 1985. The nest was empty 7 July. On 11 August I saw a Peregrine Falcon in Adams Co. On 10 August I saw about a dozen Cattle Egrets and a Great Blue Heron, but on 16 August the Cattle Egrets were fewer. On 25 August we heard a Yellow-billed Cuckoo and saw a group of Swainson's Hawks. I saw 3 Grasshopper

Sparrows on 1 September and again on 9 September. On 23 September I saw 3 or 4 groups of White Pelicans, probably 400 birds total. The same day my cousin, Robert Spicknall, saw a Turkey Vulture across the line in Adams Co., and he heard Sandhill Cranes in Adams Co. 20 October. I saw some 24 October. Mrs. Mike Bunger reported House Finches at her feeder from mid-July to mid-August. On 20 October I had a Savannah Sparrow. I have seen Northern Harriers from time to time, and an immature Ferruginous Hawk 23 November. We also saw Horned Larks and Lapland Longspurs that day.

--- *Harold Turner, Box 333, Minden, Neb. 68959*

ALBINO SANDHILL CRANE. On 9 March 1985 I was using our 15-60x scope to observe a large group of Sandhill Cranes in a wet meadow south of the Platte River just west of Overton. I noticed one which was completely white, except for its dark legs, bill, and some red on the head. I watched it for quite some time and determined that the red on its head was more like

that of a Sandhill Crane than a Whooping Crane. It also appeared to be roughly the same size as a Sandhill Crane. Later the group flushed and I observed that this bird had completely white wings, including its primaries. This led us to conclude that this was a white Sandhill Crane. Other observers were my wife, Karla, my parents, Lloyd and Kathryn, and a friend, Kathy Groon.

The next day a farmer from the area stopped to report to us that he had seen what he believed to be two white Sandhill Cranes the week before, at the same location.

--- Paul Kaufman, 1101 78th, Lincoln, Nebraska 68505

WHOOPIING CRANES. There were 5 confirmed sightings of Whooping Cranes in Nebraska in the fall of 1985: 4 adults flying over the Platte near Camp Augustine, 3 m. south of Grand Island, Hall Co., 12 October; 3 adults 1.5 m. east of N 10 bridge over the Platte, Buffalo Co., 21 October; 2 adults and 1 young, 16 m. SW of Cody, Cherry Co., 30-31 October; 2 adults and

1 young at Lake Maloney, Lincoln Co., 31 October; and 5 adults 16 m. NNE of Stapleton, Logan Co., 10 November.

There were 7 probable sightings: 2 .5 m. S of Comstock, Custer Co., 28 September; 3 8 m. NE of Tryon, McPherson Co., 16 October; seven 3 m. WNW of Fairfield, Clay Co., 21 October; 2 at Lake Helen, Gothenburg, Dawson Co., 29 October; 5 20 m. NNW of Brownlee, Cherry Co., 9 November; 6 10 m. S. of Callaway, Custer Co., 10 November; and 2 at the I-80 Interchange WSW of Wood River, Hall Co., 17 November.

There were 4 unconfirmed sightings: 2 flying 4 m. NNW of Cairo, Howard Co., 24 October; 3 on N. Loup River, 6 m. E. of Brewster, Blaine Co., 30 October; 5 3 m. WSW of Ordinance Plant, Hall Co., 11 November; and 6 flying 2 m. E. of Arnold, Custer Co., 10 November.

The Fish and Wildlife Service office in Grand Island also reported that as of 30 December all 16 Canadian young had arrived at Aransas, and 78 older birds. Since 84 left for Canada in the spring, 6 older birds are unaccounted



for. The first bird probably arrived on 2 October, making it the earliest known arrival on record.

*Grus Americana* (25:1) reports that as of late December 24 adult and 4 juvenile Whoopers were in New Mexico, but Dr. Roderick Drewien believes that more than 30 are alive. Two of these birds migrated east of the Rockies this year.

SOUTHEAST NOTES. I saw a Broad-winged Hawk 15 September 1985 at Brownville Recreation Area, along the Missouri River in Nemaha Co. There were 6 Red-necked Phalaropes on a farm pond south of Auburn, Nemaha Co., 17 September. Two Yellow-billed Cuckoos were still at Indian Cave State Park 13 October. That was in the Nemaha Co. section. In the Richardson Co. section I saw a Solitary Vireo 15 September. I found a Gray Catbird 25 October in a wildlife planting containing autumn olive. On 22 November I had 10 Evening Grosbeaks at my feeder, and one was at another feeder 8 February 1986.

Two male Purple Finches were at an Auburn feeder 29 December. During the winter Red-headed Woodpeckers were the most commonly observed woodpeckers at Indian Cave State Park. There were large flocks of Robins in southeast Nebraska this winter. The largest probably was one of over 300 in Otoe Co. on 24 January. They appeared to be flying to a roost.

--- *John Row, 1100 P St., Auburn, Neb. 68305*

BARN-OWL. On 22 September 1984 I saw an immature Barn-Owl in a corn field near Holdrege, in Phelps Co.

--- *Gloria Erickson, 315 18th Ave., Holdrege, Neb. 68949*

BARRED OWL IN KNOX COUNTY. The first week in June 1985 I heard a Barred Owl calling on our river acres about half a mile north of Bohemia Prairie Wildlife Management Area, which is about 9 miles southwest of Niobrara.

My son Steve and I heard it 24 September and my husband, Phil, and I heard it 8 October. This is the first for Knox Co. that I know of.

--- Lona Schreier, Box G., Verdigre, Nebraska 68783

CORRECTION TO RED-NAPED SAPSUCKER ARTICLE. It was the specimen collected 23 September 1919 (ZM 6312) that was judged to be a Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, not the 29 September specimen (ZM 6313) (NBR 53:73). A couple of more obvious errors are: it is the A.O.U., not N.O.U. Checklist (p. 73), and Red-naped, not Red-breasted, Sapsucker (p. 74).

CASSIN'S KINGBIRDS. On 25 July 1985 I was in Banner Co., working on the Breeding Bird Atlas in a nice windbreak, with good-sized Siberian elms, pines, and junipers. I was first attracted by a very different voice, which seemed to be coming from Western Kingbirds. As I watched these birds they did not seem to act quite like Western Kingbirds -- they were not as active or as quick to dart out. When I finally gathered my wits and began to figure out the possibilities I looked carefully at the tail and could see no white outer tail feathers. The identification was confirmed in my mind when I got home and listened to recordings of Cassin's Kingbirds -- no doubt at that point. Because there were also Western Kingbirds in the windbreak, it is a little difficult to tell exactly how many Cassin's were present, but from the calling that was going on there had to be at least three.

--- Alice Kenitz, HC50 Box 38B, Gering, Nebraska 69341

WACHISKA AUDUBON SOCIETY (LINCOLN) BLUEBIRD PROJECT. We volunteered to manage the Game and Parks Commission Bluebird trails in Lancaster and Seward counties in addition to our own trail at Nine-mile Prairie. During the first 6 months we removed most of the existing boxes, repaired, cleaned, and modified them, and replaced them in more suitable locations. We covered the entrance holes for the winter to prevent mice from destroying the boxes. We monitored 162 nest boxes on 15 trails, but only 87 boxes on 6 trails were patrolled weekly. Because of limited manpower, the remaining 75 boxes on 9 trails were patrolled irregularly -- as often as possible, but seldom more than once every 2 to 4 weeks.

The success rate was dramatically greater on those trails that were patrolled weekly -- 147 Bluebirds fledged vs. 48 on trails patrolled less often, for approximately the same number of boxes. Also, when boxes were not checked every week, it was difficult to be sure the young birds really fledged successfully. Bluebirds usually lay clutches of 3 to 6 eggs, which hatch in about 2 weeks. All of the 287 eggs laid in our boxes were sky blue, although in some places as many as 7% are said to be pure white. Young Bluebirds fledge (leave the nest) a little more than 2 weeks after hatching, but are fed and cared for by the adults for some time afterwards.

If the used nest from the first brood is removed from the box, often the female Bluebird will start a new nest while the male continues to care for the fledglings. We fledged 106 young from first broods, 82 from second broods, and 7 from the 2 pairs of adults that successfully nested 3 times this summer. One of the latter pairs was the first to begin nesting, with a full clutch of eggs discovered 6 April. Most birds finished nesting by the end of July, though several continued through much of August.

Our greatest problem has been competition from House Wrens. Particularly troublesome at Twin Lakes, they would puncture and remove Bluebird eggs and fill the boxes with twigs. Despite our best efforts to discourage them -- this is where weekly patrolling really made a difference

-- we probably fledged more Wrens than Bluebirds. House Sparrows were also a problem, especially at Branched Oak Lake. Since they are not protected by law, however, we could toss out nests, even if they contained eggs. For this reason, we fledged Sparrows only when a trail was not patrolled for several weeks. Sparrows are very aggressive birds that will drive away Bluebirds and usurp their nesting places. They are also a serious hazard because they are known to enter the boxes and kill both the young and adult occupants. As far as we know, we have not yet lost any Bluebirds, but we suspect House Sparrows of killing the Wrens we've found pecked to death inside some of the boxes.

Since Tree Swallows are not that common here, we've been encouraging their use of our boxes. Unlike Bluebirds, they raise only one brood of young per year, but our 16 pairs laid about 90 eggs this summer and fledged at least 56 young, mostly in Lancaster Co. Black-capped Chickadees, also welcome, attempted to nest in 2 of our boxes, but were unsuccessful.

We suspect raccoons were one of our problems at Wagon Train Lake and Twin Lakes. Apparently, they would either reach inside the box and pull out the nest, or else chew through the front of the box. Woodpeckers damaged some of the fronts on the boxes, trying to enlarge the opening (possibly to feed on the ants that infested some boxes). People were also a problem -- 5 of our boxes were stolen and several more were shot.

Now we're planning and preparing for next year. Because of our modifications, we'll be able to leave the front of the boxes open all winter, so deer mice won't build nests in them. Many of the boxes will be moved from the wooden fence posts to free-standing steel posts, to make it more difficult for raccoons to get at the boxes and to enable us to get farther from the bushy areas preferred by Wrens. We'll probably discontinue a couple of our least successful trails but still increase the total number of boxes, by pairing them at each location. In some cases, this will give Bluebirds a convenient empty box for their second brood; in others, it might help solve the problem of competition from other species.

--- William C. Garthright, 2240 N. 31st St., Lincoln, Neb. 68503